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ABSTRACT

While the teacher is recognized as the primary force in the improvement of educational programs, supervision should go beyond focusing on teachers to focusing on the entire instructional program, which includes the subject, materials, facilities, students, teachers, and aides. There are several routes through which supervision can be approached--experienced teachers, ministry of education officials, teacher self-evaluation, evaluation through students, and the supervisory team. Major supervisory activities center around observation and provision of feedback before, during, and after observation. Skill and attitudes needed for effective supervision include acceptance, sincerity, rapport building, listening, constructive criticism, and reinforcing. Supervision should result in a resolution or course of action designed to improve an aspect of the instructional program. (CB)

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SUPERVISORY PROCEDURES AND METHODS OF PROGRAMME IMPROVEMENT IN NIGERIA

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A INTRODUCTION

Supervision has been narrowly considered as the observation of a performer (teacher) by a generally agreed - to - be excellent performer (Supervisor). Taking a still narrower view, it has been described as teaching teachers how to teach. We however observe that the teacher is not and cannot be the only focus of supervision. Supervision should focus on the entire instructional programme - the subject, materials, facilities, students, teachers and aides. All supervision, regardless of its procedure, has the same objective which is the improvement of programmes.

Educationals programmes are dynamic. They change and are in the process of changing. This assumption is basic to the supervisor's role. The supervisor has to adopt effective procedures and methods that can help to direct this change. The nature and direction of change should, in the judgment of the participants, improve on the existing situation. Change in education usually means change in teachers. Buildings, subjects, materials, curriculum formals, and other changes should not be ignored but need to be considered in proper perspective with relationship to change in teachers.

We may accept that the teacher is a primary force in the improvement of educational programmes. It has been argued that there is a direct relationship between the quality of the educational process. Teachers translate educational theory

to practice but they need the help of management in order to do this effectively. Management will also have to organize (or re-organize) the human elements, physical resources and their related technology in support of the desired improvement. In other words, teachers may be the acknowledged teachers of improvement in educational programmes but they cannot lead effectively without the support of physical resources and related technology. Supervisory procedures that will lead to programme improvement in Nigeria may have to focus on the teacher and the physical support required for the teacher's performance of the job.

B WHO IS THE EFFECTIVE SUPERVISOR?

Supervisors are often those who have "earned their stripes" as teachers and/or are second level administrators. "It is unheard of for the supervisor to be a newly trained, newly educated, or newly assigned specialist from academic or professional field". (DeWitt, 1977: 589). These "experienced" practitioners are knowledgeable people. They are people who can direct change in programmes.

(i) Experienced Teachers:

There is the assumption that the "experienced" teachers are very conservative. They seem to prefer things being done in the "good old" ways. They are clugs in the wheels of innovation. They resist experimentation

and held on to the rules of the thumb that worked for them at their own time. They value conformity to the norms of the institution and fuss at the idea of change.

Cusick (1973:34) recorded an incident where a teacher was fired. She was accused of "talking over the heads of the kids", and "forcing her sophisticated views on the kids". The teacher may have been dismissed because she did not conform to the norms of the institution. She excluded herself from informal meetings with other members (especially the older generation) which would have afforded her the opportunity of submitting her personal views to the institution for scrutiny and possible accommodation. She may have been tolerated if the institution knew why she held there "sophisticated views". The incident calls to question the criteria supervisors use to evaluate effevtive teaching. It also poses the question: Is firing a teacher a solution to poor teaching? Cusick mentioned that the woman was fired somewhere else for the same offence. She may never improve. If instructional improvement is the major objective of supervision, then the process should be able to help teachers to grow and develop their professional competence.

(ii) Ministry Officials:

The invasion of persons from outside the classroom has often been resisted by the teachers. Such invasions, no matter how "non-threatening" we may try to make the environment,

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are seen as examinations by the teachers. They make attempts at pleasing the visiting supervisor because they want to pass the examination. The visitor may be the Head of Department, the school head and the assistant Inspectors from the Ministries of Education are also expected to visit the classrooms. These supervisors perform useful functions but there is no doubt that they see little of what goes on in the classroom.

(iii) The Teachers themselves: Self Evaluation

The process of professional growth demands that the teacher's performance be observed, analyzed and feedback given to the teacher. The argument that the teacher is the most qualified person to evaluate her teaching seems to be pervading current literature on supervision. For example, Alfonso (1977) argues that teachers should be their own supervisors:

> Who knows best what goes on in a classroom and how it can be made better than teachers themselves? And who is it that can evaluate good teaching better than one's peers?

(iv) Students' Learning Centered:

Seager (1971 : 3) argues that any improvement in instruction depends on the student's behaviour as well as the teacher's behaviour. "Therefore it would be unwise to exclude students from the formal supervisory process".

Seager developed a diagnostic instrument of supervision to provide secondary school teachers and their supervisors with each others' and the students opinions of how much improvement was desirable in six areas based on their responses to 29 items describing what a class might be like.

Some of the items are:

(1) The teacher understands pupils' difficulties and helps them see how to correct their mistakes.

(2) The teacher uses good ideas suggested by the pupils.

(3) The pupils understand the teacher's explanations.

(4) The teacher understands what pupils mean even when they find it difficult to put their thoughts into words.

Niedermeyer (1977) is of the opinion that if instruction is to be effective, supervisors and teachers should ask themselves: "What do we agree is important and necessary for students to learn? " He proposed a supervisory process based on the following conditions.

(1) Instruction focused on clearly defined, agreed-upon statements of what pupils will learn to do as a result of instruction.

(2) The frequent use of materials and procedures that assess the pupils' acquisition of the agreed - upon outcomes of instruction.

(3) The availability of classroom - verified instructional materials and procedures keyed directly to the outcomes and the devices for assessment.

We may not demand that all the students in a class (100%) attain the stated objective (100%) but what they do and say in relation to the stated objective may be useful index of students' learning. We need to know how well the students are working on the assigned task. The school system exists for the sake of students. Every thing that exists in the system exists for the sake of students' learning. It follows then that improvement in the programmes we offer should be directed at improving learning. Supervision should be consequently refocused. It should be directed at students learning.

(v) The Supersisory Team:

How can teachers get better than random and sporadic feedback about the effects of their own teaching on the life in the classroom? How can they gain a systematic understanding and some insights about the effects of techniques, strategies, and personal style? How can teachers be assisted to identify where and how to improve their instruction? These questions suggest a supervisory procedure that can help teachers to improve their performance through the analysis and feedback of the observed classroom interactions. A supervisory team may be preferred. The team leader, who should be more experienced than the others, should organise them in such a way as to involve other teachers. Subject departments could be organized into supervisory teams. Supervision may then be one of the roles of every department. The department, working in close cooperation with the school head, can invite Ministry of Education

officials to participate in the supervisory team.

C. OBSERVATION AND CONFERENCING: THE HUB OF SUPERVISORY PROCEDURES

Observation of the teacher's performance is like collecting raw data which will be discussed and analyzed with the teacher during the conference session. The supervisor observes to see what is happening so that he can discuss with the teacher later. The supervisory cycle used in clinical supervision may be adapted to the needs of Nigerian teachers. Snyder (1981 : 523) lists the five stages in clinical supervision as:

(1) Pre-observation conference: a contract between a teacher and observer regarding the purpose of the specific observation.

(2) Observation: Actual data collection of events in the classroom as it relates to the contract mentioned above.

(3) Analysis and strategy session: Review and interpretation of collected data as they relate to the contract and to pedagogical theory and research.

(4) Conference: Feedback to the teacher on the observed teaching/learning segment; preparation for "next steps".

(5) Post-observation critique: Joint analysis of the usefulness of the foregoing observation cycle activities.

(i) The Pre-Observation Conference:

It is necessary that the supervisor talks with the teachers before the observation of the teacher's lesson. The pre-observation conference sets the social climate for the supervisor - teacher interraction. We noted earlier that

supervision focuses on the improvement of learning. It may not be a formal session where the teacher may be expected to rehearse everything he will teach. Rather, the supervisor may make it an informal meeting where both things related and unrelated to the lession may be discussed. During this process of communication the supervisor assures the teacher that he is a colleague and a friend. The assurance is necessary in order to help calm the teacher's neves thereby enabling her to perform efficiently.

The pre-obsefvation conference also affords the teachers the opportunity to talk about what to expect in her classroom. She should freely discuss the students' learning rate. If there are fast and slow learners in the class, the teacher should sensitize her supervisor to these and discuss the strategies she proposes to use in meeting their needs. It is not expected that the supervisor should make serious alterations but the supervisor can cooperate with the teacher in working out an alternative plan to the one proposed by the teacher. The teacher should discuss the instructional material to be in the class with her supervisor. She should willingly tell him why she has preferred one material to the other. Both of them should agree on the proposed strategies for meeting the specified instructional objectives.

(ii) The Observation:

The supervisor(s) sitting where he may not distract the the students' attention will endeavour to write down what he hears and sees as comprehensively as possible. Verbatim records will be preferred in order to facilitate the analysis of what took place in the teaching. The supervisor's added eyes increases the data on the teaching - learning process. He gives the teacher a perspective that is not available to her - a disengaged observer.

It is common practice to fill rating forms at this stage of observation. Where the teacher is allowed to see the forms after the observation she sees - things like: "Clarity of presentation - 6", "lesson movement - 5", "Instructional materials - 6". The teacher may not be able to say why these things attracted the marks. It is known that these marks may not be able to tell the teacher specifically what she should improve. They may not even reinforce her good performance because they do not tell her what made the performance good.

We should bear in mind that the Video tape is a standard recording device. Anything close to the Video will be recommended. This is because the Video shows the teacher what she did exactly as she did it. By merely seeing herself, she can reflect on her mistakes and map out strategy for improvement. We may suggest then that in addition to the

evaluation forms, supervisor should record ethnographic materials in the classrooms. Cassettee recorders and photographs may be used to give objective feed back to the teacher.

(iii) The Post-Observation Conference:

A conference could be held whether or not a student has taught. For instance, if for some extraordinary circumstances the student was unable to teach, or the supervisor was unable to observe the lession, a conference of some kind may still be held. During this time both of them analyse the cause of the disruption, agree on a solution, and work out a plan to avoid future occurance.

It should be remembered that a conference must be a two-way communication. It is a period for exchanging ideas, facts and opinions. It is not a lecture period. The teacher must have opporutunity to receive and contribute to the conversation. Nwaogu (1980:68) advised that: "Every observation should be followed by an individual conference if it is to be productive and minimally threatening to the teacher".

It is misleading to assume that there is a single best way for supervisor to conduct conferences. Show me the single best way to teach, then I will show you the single best way to hold conferences. It should be noted that conferencing techniques that work well for one supervisor may not work well for another. Likewise, conferencing techniques that are effective with one teacher

may not be effective with another. The supervisor should decide which strategy is most appropriate in the gien situation.

Drawing from the learning theory that students learn what they do by themselves not what is done for them by the teachers, we can say that the effective conference should be non-directive. The supervisor should expose the teacher to options and alternatives. The teacher makes the final choice. We know that people work hardest to improve those things they feel should be improved, Teachers should be helped to grow in their own way and at their own pace.

Supervision is basically a helping relationship. Helping relationship takes place by the mutual consent of the individuals involved. One cannot be compelled to be helpful or to receive help. This means that effective supervision should help the teachers to evaluate their teaching. Supervisors should help the teachers to select, justify, practice and reinforce their teaching styles. Teachers should develop their observational and self analysis skill. They should be able to reflect on their performance.

D THE SUPERVISORS' ATTITUDES AND SKILLS:

How supervisors react to teachers and how they communicate these feelings are of critical importance in supervision. If supervisors demonstrate a genuine "acceptance" of teachers, they will feel, as Rogers (1957) puts it, that they are "received". Acceptance means that the supervisor is willing to let teachers be themselves. This non-judgemental role permits

teachers to reveal themselves so that they can obtain a true look at themselves. Teachers' capacities to solve their teaching problems are taken for granted. They have elaborate stores of pedagogical theories. The issue at stake is liberating these relevant and related theories from the stores to address their problems. The supervisors, by attitudes and relevant approaches, should help teachers to free these capacities.

The pre-observation conference is basically a rapport building session, but we have to note that rapport is continuous and continuing, not something that can be forgotten about once established. It is generated by the sincerity and smoothness with which the supervisor opens and conducts the conference.

Listening is an essential attitude. Call it a skill and we may agree on "attitudinal skill". One has to develop the will to listen. Supervisors should desire to listen to teachers. The teacher may have reasons for her actions. We need to hear her out. We should ask them questions where they are unable to express themselves readily. Remember that the teacher is there to discuss problems and not to listen to another person's experiences, which are usually not considered relevant by the teachers.

The supervisor should be able to offer constructive criticism to the teacher in a non- threatening way. Teachers may put up less defences if the facts of their performance

are described to them. With the facts before them, they do the evaluation. They may not readily perceive the unintended consequences of some of their teaching behaviours. The supervisor may, by questioning, lead students to realize the unintended consequences of their actions. Notice the transition in this case:

> Supervisor (E): We have more time to talk about the metric system. Why did you choose the carpet, the rug, instead of some other place for the lesson.
> Teacher (L): Another room perhaps?
> E: No, any other place in the classroom.
> L: Cos em ... may be its informal.
> E: You wanted to be informal?
> L: I did but then, as I got into it I kind of felt that I shouldn't have because I think these kids need authority figure. Somebody who is going to say, listen, I am your teacher.
>
> (Ekpunobi, E. 1978:21)

One of the don'ts of criticism is that too many of them should not be given at one conference. A supervisor may have to balance one criticism with one praise. Professional growth, for most teachers, is not a fast process. It has been observed that direct efforts to bring about drastic changes in teaching behaviour often result in "cosmetic effect". Sometimes teachers accept the given criticism in order to please the supervisor. They do not assimilate the skill in order to improve their performance. Supervisors should therefore increase the number of visits to teachers, and should not give too many criticisms during a visit.

Success breeds success. Reinforcement involves encouraging or praising the teacher for the things she does well. Such reinforced behaviours tend to be repeated. Specific reinforcements are very effective. Examine the following statements:

(a) "Every member of the class had a fair chance to answer the questions you asked".

(b) "Your questioning skill was good".

(c) "That was a good lesson".

The first statement (a) is preferred. What made the questioning skill and the lesson good? The teacher needs to know the specific things that made the lesson good.

The recognition of the importance of reinforcement to the modification of teacher behaviour has led to the development of a supervisory strategy known as the "Well Dones Approach". It emphasizes the teachers strengths or well dones.

D DEVELOPING IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

The supervisory process should culiminate in a commitment to some resolution or course of action that is intended to improve the programme. By careful planning the deficiencies observed during supervision could be eliminated. For example, supervision should unearth our staff development needs. We have often heard of in-service training for teachers and workshops organized by different subject associations. These sessions are more often than not directed at the "average" teacher.

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The organizers assume that they are filling in the blanks where the average teacher is deficient. The workshops may be making more positive contributions when they address identified problems in the observed teaching - learning situation.

Supervisors should be the main sources where we draw our content for in-service courses. These courses should be emphasized and as many teachers as possible encouraged to participate in such courses. It is known that professional growth is a continuing process. The supervisors who have interracted with many teachers may be in better positions to understand the professional needs of teachers.

(i) Departmental Organization

The school could be organized in such a way as to enable teachers to share ideas. Begining teachers should learn from the experienced. The experienced teachers on their part should update their knowledge with the help of the beginning teachers who are fresh from the universities and colleges. Departmental meetings provide avenues for such interractions. Members of a department can share their views on strategies for tackling an academic problem. The department can then agree on a plan of action for solving the problem.

It has been emphasised that insiders are best suited to supervise intruction. Outsider are

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unaware of the intricacies of interaction in the the class-rooms. They observe "window dressed" lessons. Insiders know the individual students and can relate teaching-learning problems to the students' needs. Each subject department should form a supervisory team. They make supervision a continuing process. It is not something that is done and forgotten about until the next visit by an outsider. Rather, every member of the team expects to be supervised at any moment of the school year.

The supervisory team can transform supervision into a growth process that it is. The evaluation aspect of it will no longer be a threat. Teachers may reveal their problems and be prepared to talk about their real difficulties if they know they can get help from others. Of course they cannot pretend indefinitely, they cannot hide their weakenesses for ever. The supervisory team will come to know the strengths and weaknesses of the members.

The supervisory team can invite Ministry of Education officials to participate in the team work. These outsiders may pay unsheduled visits especially when they go to inspect school facilities, but participating on the invitation of a supervisory team may be more professionally rewarding. The Ministry official may serve as a resource person to the supervisory team. The person will offer assitance where

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it is needed. It has been said that the facts got from these supervisory processes should be used to reshape our educational policies. They should provide standards of what to expect from the field. They provide the content of in-service courses.

(ii) Improving Instructional Materials:

Students learn from teachers, the peer group, the instructional materials provided and from many other sources. Instructional materials - those materials made available to the student during the learning process - are important in shaping what students learn. They are basic to the educative process. Supervisors should realistically appraise the ability and limitations of instructional materials. The appraisal should start from the individual lesson to units and to entire subject. Sometimes the school system recommends sets of textbooks for different subjects. These books are used by the students but little is known about the impact of the textbooks on the students. Supervision should be able to reveal the strengths and and weaknesses of textbooks used in the schools.

Some of the instructional materials found in the schools are there because educational theory says that they are useful in teaching - learning. Some are ornaments decorating school walls. Some do not relate to the subjects taught in the school. Supervisors should ask the questions:

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(1) Are the materials really needed?

(2) What are the materials' anticipated accomplishments?

(3) Does the material represent the best alternative available to achieve stated objective?

(4) Would more effective classroom learning result from selecting another type of material?

Teachers should be encouraged to produce and use their own instructional materials. The supervisory team should work out procedures for producing materials locally.

(iii) Teachers' Commitment and Motivation:

Commitment and motivation to work are the ingredients needed in the improvement of Nigerian programmes. Teachers' attitudes - their predisposition to behave in particular ways - are central to programme improvement. Teachers like other human beings, operate within their own belief systems. Supervisors can advice teachers on how to improve their performance but they cannot force teachers to take the advice. We have considered the supervisors attitudes and skills. It is with these skills that the supervisor motivates teachers to act. Teachers should be helped to develop desirable attitudes towards changing the school programme for the better. Teachers knowledge of subject and mastery of technique may go unused if the

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teacher does not perceive them worthwhile. Our supervision should make teachers perceive the worth of putting these changes into practice thereby helping them to grow in their own way and at their own pace.

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